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ABSTRACT

Declining enrollments and the trend toward alternative certification for teachers and their impact on schools of education and staff development programs are discussed in this paper. Although alternative certification programs are meant to eliminate the practice of issuing emergency certificates by school superintendents, the effect is that they virtually eliminate preservice training of secondary teachers by colleges of education, and the burden of training them falls on the school district. The trends nationally toward more stringent teacher and administrator evaluation, career ladders, and merit pay plans also have significant impacts on staff development. Florida law stipulates that prospective candidates in the alternative certification program will need to satisfactorily complete a modified beginning teacher program during the first half year of teaching, and successfully complete the Florida Beginning Teacher Program during the second half of the school year. The burden this places on school districts' staff development programs is discussed and prospective changes in staff development based on certification trends are considered. (JD)

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HOW DOES THE ISSUE OF CHANGING TEACHER EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION AFFECT STAFF DEVELOPMENT?

a paper presented at the

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TRENDS IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

Feistritzer (1984), Director of the National Center for Education Information and author of The Making of a Teacher: A Report on Teacher Education and Certification, stated that "the certification of classroom teachers in the U.S. is a mess (p. 36)." The statement was based on the wide variance in certification requirements among the states and the failure of teachers certified in one state to meet requirements in another state. It was also pointed out in the report that all but two states, Vermont and Virginia, "issue substandard, limited or emergency credentials to people who don't meet all of the criteria for a real bona-fide teaching credential (pp. 39-40)." This practice prevails, according to the report, simply because of the continuing teacher shortage problem in urban school districts, and in southern and western states experiencing population growth (p. 40).

In Florida, for example, where the population has grown steadily for the past several decades, approximately 60% of the teaching force hired each year obtain their preservice training in other states (Florida Department of Education, 1984, p. 24). All of these people receive a temporary certificate in their first year of employment to allow them time to meet Florida's certification requirements. This temporary certificate can be renewed for two additional years if necessary. During the period in which these teachers hold a temporary certificate, they are required to successfully pass the State Teacher Certification Examination and demonstrate mastery of Florida's Generic Teaching Competencies through its Beginning Teacher Program. As of June 1, 1986, all prospective candidates for a Regular Florida Certificate will also need to pass a subject area examination and show proficiency on 35 generic competencies.

Other states, such as Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee have already tightened certification requirements, and an additional 18 states are considering reform of their certification requirements (Feistritzer, p. 44). This trend toward more stringent rules and regulations in certifying teachers has a direct effect on staff development at the district level, and on pre- and inservice programs at the college level.

Feistritzer also reports that the present teacher shortage will continue to grow, "and that by 1992, supply will be only two-thirds of demand for additional elementary and secondary classroom teachers (p. 7)." This trend will also impact on district staff development departments and colleges of education. The reasons for declining enrollments in preservice teacher education programs in Florida, and other states as well, appear to be : a) increased entrance requirements; b) increased graduation requirements; c) low starting salaries; d) increased certification requirements; e) perceived low social status of teachers; and f) prospects of only finding a position in predominantly low socio-economic status schools during the first few years of employment (Smith, 1984, p. 14).

In Dade and Broward County Schools, Florida, fourth and seventh largest urban school districts in the nation, teams of recruiters annually take junkets to the northeast and midwest to seek teachers for their classrooms because Colleges of Education in Florida simply do not produce sufficient teachers to meet the demand. Enrollments in preservice teacher education programs throughout the state have steadily declined during the past few years, and were it not for increases in enrollment at the graduate level, many of the state's

colleges of education would be in jeopardy. As an example, the University of Miami, in Miami, Florida, decided to phase out its preservice teacher training program in 1984 because of low enrollments in its elementary and secondary tracks.

The teacher shortage condition may well be accompanied by another which is even more deleterious to our nation's educational well-being: namely, alternative teacher certification programs such as the ones recently adopted by New Jersey and Florida. In both states, school districts are given responsibility and authority to attract arts and science graduates to teach in secondary schools and train these individuals in the pedagogical skills necessary to be effective in the classroom. In the Florida Omnibus Education Act of 1984 (Section 231.172), there is a stipulation that prospective candidates in the alternative certification program will need to satisfactorily complete a modified beginning teacher program during the first half year of teaching, and successfully complete the Florida Beginning Teacher Program during the second half of the school year. The law also stipulates that school districts who use this certification plan will receive the funds normally given to colleges of education for such training. As of November, 1984, no district in Florida had submitted a plan to the State Board of Education simply because the Florida Department of Education had not written rules to implement the program.

It is expected that colleges of education in Florida will suffer even more declines in enrollment if districts adopt the alternative certification model and require their staff development departments to provide pedagogical training for the arts and science graduates hired to teach in the secondary schools. If

the alternative certification model is implemented in Florida, other states develop similar models.

The changes in New Jersey are even more extensive than those in Florida. Educators in that state have concluded that the district-based alternative teacher certification programs will "replace, rather than supplement, the college-based programs (The New Jersey Voice of Higher Education, May, 1984, p. 6)." Although the alternative program was meant to eliminate the practice of issuing emergency certificates by school superintendents, the effect of such a model is that it virtually eliminates preservice training of secondary teachers by colleges of education. The burden of training thus falls on the districts. Meanwhile, children will be taught by apprentices who may not possess the skills necessary to be effective in the classroom.

According to Feistritzer, eleven other states are considering alternatives to college training for secondary teachers (op. cit., p. 45). If the trend continues, there will be major consequences for staff development directors and colleges of education as they now exist.

Another trend that is developing rapidly is reduction of <u>areas</u> of certification in order to make certification processes more efficient at the state, district, and university level. In Florida, for example, there are presently 240 academic and vocational areas of certification available to school personnel. Florida's Education Standards Commission is presently conducting hearings on a proposal to reduce that number to 42 generic subject areas. If the proposal meets with approval by the State Board of Education, the burden of determining teacher qualifications to teach specific subjects will fall on the

school districts, and course work needed by individuals to become "district certified" will have to be made available through the district's staff development program or nearby collaborating universities. The full ramifications of the proposal have not yet been studied by all school district departments or by colleges of education.

The trends nationally toward more stringent teacher and administrator evaluation, career ladders, and merit pay plans also have significant impacts on staff development. Each of these programs calls for increased staff training in anticipation of eligibility for financial reward, or to remediate deficiencies among teachers and administrators who are judged to be somewhat less than high performing individuals. Once again, the burden will most likely fall on staff development directors at the district level.

There also appears to be some movement nationally towards standardization of the process of certifying teachers. Feistritzer suggests "a national proficiency examination, such as those administered to doctors, lawyers, accountants, and other true professionals (op. cit., p. 60)." Federal intervention in the certification malaise may well be in the minds of certain key education advisors to the President. Educational excellence in our nation's schools, if truly a goal of our political leaders, will of necessity require some measure of federal regulation with regard to teacher selection, training, and licensing. There certainly seems to be sufficient evidence of the inability of our 50 states to communicate with one another in the field of education generally, and certification specifically.

PROSPECTIVE CHANGES IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT BASED ON CERTIFICATION TRENDS

For the most part, school district staff development programs in states where lifetime certificates are not issued have been geared toward planning and delivering inservice courses for teachers needing to renew their teaching certificates, for teachers wishing to add other areas of certification to their existing certificates, or for teachers who simply want, or are required, to gain new information or skills. But current trends indicate that change is likely.

First, colleges of education may well have less of a role to play in preservice teacher training, and school districts will be forced to fill the void. Consideration should be given to the development of short and long-range goals, fiscal impact, deployment of human and facility resources, utilization of educational expertise, and roles and responsibilities of personnel. At present, it is totally unrealistic to ask school districts to provide full-blown teacher training programs in the multitude of subject area specializations common in our schools' curricula. But it may well be in the realm of possibility for school districts to set up preservice teacher training programs in selected curriculum areas such as math, science, computer education, foreign languages, and vocational education. Unfortunately, there appears to be little evidence of collaborative planning among state department, school district, and university officials relative to needed changes, division of responsibility, and timing.

Second, the strong movement toward more district control of initial certification and less at the college and state level will probably mean more district/university collaboration to meet certification standards established at the local levels. If districts, rather than state departments of education,

will approve college teacher training programs, then there may be diffusion rather than improvement of expectations for the diverse areas of expertise inherent in the teaching profession, and this diffusion may cause even more inconsistency in certification practices within the states. For example, since Florida has 67 school districts, there may well be 67 different sets of certification standards. The potential impact on colleges of education is indeed overwhelming. Competition among colleges of education to become approved by school districts would be fierce. In addition, competition between school districts for university resources would be equally as fierce, especially in rural areas of the state not easily serviced by universities.

How well staff developers are prepared to meet the changes resulting from teacher education and certification reform is a question that must be answered immediately. Additionally, staff developers must begin dialogue with pedagogical experts, educational researchers, budget directors, and program evaluators. Education and certification reforms, whether minor in some states or major in others, will impact staff development in some form or another. There must be systematic evaluation occuring each step of the way to determine the validity of all aspects of teacher education and certification reform.

Education should not take a reactive stance and wait until it is forced to make some critical decisions. Education professionals should become proactive and begin to study the trends and make some plans in advance of what appears to be close at hand. The analysis should include such things as 1) the merging roles of staff development offices and college of education programs, 2) levels and areas of expertise among trainers, 3) duplication of services and resources, and 4) impact on the quality of educational programs.

One consequence is that staff development and college of education funding in states presently undergoing teacher education and certification reform should be increased. Too often, personnel become obliged to assume additional program responsibilities emanating from legislation without being given additional resources.

In states considering an alternative certification program for secondary teachers, it may become necessary for school districts to contract with colleges of education for pedagogical training and clinical supervision, rather than attempt to replicate general and special methods courses. It is conceivable that some large urban school districts, in order to meet their needs, would consider adding college of education faculty to their pool of staff development trainers.

One change that appears to be a certainty is that colleges of education and school district staff development offices in every state must work collaboratively in order to guide the current educational reform movement. At no other time in the history of education has there been a greater need for institutional collaboration than the present. The National Council of States on Inservice Education should consider sponsoring a national symposium on education and certification reform which would result in recommendations to educational policy makers at the federal and state levels. In addition, each state department of education should sponsor a meeting of college of education and school district officials to evaluate its own reform legislation. Regardless of what may or may not occur at the state or federal levels, each of us has the responsibility to effect change in our own domain.

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